

Refounding Labour

Real change for Partnership into Power

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Foreword



There's no better team in British politics than Labour Party members. We believe passionately in the power of politics to change lives, and everyday more people are joining us because they want to make our country better and fairer.

So I was honoured to be elected Chair of the National Policy Forum earlier this summer, because I've been given the opportunity to work in partnership with you to develop new policies to win us the next election.

To do this successfully the policy forum, and our policy making process has to change. As I said at the NPF meeting in Birmingham this year, we need a system which empowers our members, draws on their expertise and gives everyone a genuine say, which is why I have been working to reform our policy making process.

Following the consultation on Partnership into Power reform, we have a new set proposals designed to give Party members more of a say, to reach out to supporters new and old, and to create real, meaningful and focused debate around the big issues and challenges facing Britain.

The changes we want to make reflect and address the real frustration many Party members feel with the current system. I want to make it better for all our members, individual or affiliated, to engage more effectively with their representatives, policy commissions, and each other, feeding in their ideas and seeing their contributions debated.

We will strengthen the role of our democratic institutions and representatives with the NPF reinvigorated at the heart of policy development, and reformed policy commissions focusing on the issues that matter to members.

But we want to test our policy and debate our ideas further. Policy commission papers will be published online and anyone will be able to place a submission and post comments on the website. Members can then see these submissions and can respond to them. We will do this through an online 'Policy Hub' providing an accessible portal for debate and engagement: an electronic 'town square' for the Labour movement.

Ed Miliband set out his intention to transform Labour's structures in order to make us stronger and ready to win. These exciting changes will equip us to do just that. I'm excited by the prospect of a reinvigorated, empowered and vibrant policy debate taking place across our movement. I'm pleased to be playing a key role in it. Above all, I look forward to working with you to make our new policy making process a success.

Angela Eagle MP
Chair of the National Policy Forum

Introduction

We need real change to transform how we make our policy. Real challenges face our country - in our economy, our society and our politics. If we are to rise to these challenges we need to draw on the whole of our movement, to harness the ideas, innovation and expertise that lies within.

So we will change Partnership into Power (PiP) to give Party members more of a say and to engage the wider community so that we can build a policy platform which commands the support of the British people and meets the challenges of the future.

Refounding Labour: What our members told us

Submissions to the Refounding Labour consultation were clear that members value their voice in our policy making process and that reform should enhance the system to safeguard and improve this say. There was a sense that current processes do not always do justice to the time, effort and dedication shown by members who involve themselves in policy discussions. Members told us that we need to open up the policy making process, to improve transparency and information so that members know what has happened to their submissions.

The Refounding Labour document agreed at Annual Conference 2011 committed us to reforming our policy making system to address these issues. Improvements can be made by harnessing technology to allow for a more inclusive and interactive discussion, both in terms of documents produced for consideration but also in dealing with current issues which arise outwith the current cycle of long-term policy development.

By re-establishing the original stated purpose of Partnership into Power - a deliberative, consensual system which ensures members, local parties, affiliates as well as other stakeholders have the opportunity to shape future policy - we can reinvigorate the Party and tap in to the energy and enthusiasm of our members.

Objectives

Following the consultation process the following key objectives for reform were identified:

- Produce a policy platform which commands the support of the British people.
- Create real, meaningful and focussed debate around the big issues and key challenges facing Britain, for

example, how we build a new economy.

- Reflect and addresses the real frustrations some Party members feel with the current system, with new, clear ways for members, affiliates, supporters and NPF representatives to get involved:

Recommendations

Key elements of the proposed reform package will be:

- A new 'Policy Hub' - an online home for our policy making process, where members and the public can read papers, make submissions, suggest amendments, read others' ideas, and respond to them.
- A greater role for the NPF, building on the current final year amendment process with representatives having a clear role right across a Parliamentary cycle, with a new power to take decisions on key topics issues of real importance at annual meetings of the NPF.
- A process and cycle which gives members more of a voice, with a fixed timetable providing certainty on what is happening when.
- Reformed policy commissions, reflecting Labour's key policy priorities and how the world has changed post-financial crisis.
- A streamlined system which places greater focus on topical and key issues where we seek to deliver real engagement and focused discussion.
- A new power for Annual Conference to shape the work of the National Policy Forum via a 'Policy Ballot' which will identify key topics for in depth consideration and consultation. The 'Policy Ballot' will operate alongside and additional to the current Priorities Ballot at Annual Conference; as such there will be no change to the existing Contemporary Resolutions process.
- An enhanced emphasis on community engagement, with Party units rewarded for maximising engagement and building broad support for their policy initiatives.
- Better feedback for Party members who get involved, with an online audit trail for submissions and amendments alongside published papers and newsletters on NPF business.

Real change for policy making

Opening up our policy-making processes and making our system more transparent, accountable and responsive to members and the public alike means reforming our institutions and the way we make policy in the medium and short term. We need to reform how we make policy, and the mechanisms we use to do so, so that they support us in our aim: producing an innovative policy platform which will reflect our values and the priorities of Britain.

The 'Policy Hub' - a new online home for policy making

We will open up our policy making process by creating a new online home for Partnership into Power. This 'Policy Hub' which will act as central repository for the relaunched PiP - increasing transparency, engagement and feedback. From this website people will be able to read policy papers, make submissions, read other people's ideas and suggested amendments, and respond to them.

Recommendations:

- A new Policy Hub to be created; an online home for our policy making process.
- Policy Commission papers will be published online and anyone (member or not) would be able to place a submission, suggest amendments or place comments on the website.
- Members could then view those submissions and respond, which will in turn provide a real time ranking of submission popularity.
- The final paper going to Conference will be published on the Policy Hub for all to read after each year's June NPF.
- The 'Policy Hub' will provide a place for members to engage with elected representatives and others on policy issues of the day, outside of the formal NPF process.

A new cycle of policy development

The present format of PiP has survived largely unchanged since it was agreed by Annual Conference 1997. Under our present system, policy is made via a three-year rolling programme, with documents published in each of the three years and which ultimately, once agreed by Annual Conference, form the Party's policy programme. At the same time policy commissions are tasked with considering submissions and topical issues as they arise throughout the year.

While the benefit of the present system is that it allows discussion on a broad spectrum of policy areas at all stages throughout the cycle - via consultation on large policy documents, with new iterations produced in each of the three years - there are disadvantages, particularly in the workload of NPF meetings, which have to consider all policy areas each year, resulting in significant overload towards the end, as was seen at the Warwick NPF meeting in 2008. Members have also pointed to the current system's production of voluminous policy documents which are hard for local parties to digest and comment upon.

We will reform our processes and institutions to create a more transparent system for members - one which focuses on the key political issues in order to produce a policy programme which commands the support of the public. The intention is to open up the system to allow the Party to hold real debates on genuine issues of concern. By doing so we can rebuild support for a policy making process which allows our members to talk about issues of importance to the future of our country.

Recommendations

- A five year cycle to reflect fixed term parliaments, with a clear timetable of activity.
- Shorter, focussed policy papers on central challenges facing the country produced every year before agreement by Annual Conference.
- PiP and its constituent parts will be renamed to reflect change and a new, more open and transparent, culture.

The new cycle will run as follows:

- A new 'Policy Ballot' to be held at Annual Conference which will select a number of areas for prioritisation by the NPF. These areas will be shaped by the priorities of the public and Party, with Commissions suggesting topics and the JPC shortlisting them for the year ahead based on submissions received - so the Party has a real say on what issues are prioritised and then voting on them at Annual Conference.
- Following Conference, the JPC will task Policy Commissions with producing short 'Challenge Papers' on the topics chosen setting out key questions for discussion. These papers will give focussed introductions to the issues, along with key questions to help support policy debate by Party units.
- After agreement by the JPC, these papers would go out for views, in November -via the Policy Hub - alongside a clear timetable and guidance for CLPs so they know how and when they can take part in the debate.
- Submissions in response to these 'Challenge Papers' would be accepted until the middle of February the following year, after which Commissions would draft 'Policy Papers' setting out Labour's policy approach to the issue, based on the submissions received and evidence gathered by the Commissions. Where there is clearly no consensus on important issues, Commissions will use 'Policy Papers' to ask the Party for views by including choices and options in these papers to hear what the Party and public think.
- Following agreement by the JPC, these papers will then be published by the end of March on the 'Policy Hub'. This will commence a period of further consultation and debate, with views, amendments and submissions called for.
- NPF representatives will come together for a summer meeting of the NPF, in June each year, where they will debate the papers and the key issues outstanding in the light of submissions and ideas suggested via the 'Policy Hub'.
- This meeting will see NPF representatives discuss the options presented to them in the papers. Where there is clear consensus, papers will be amended to reflect it. Where there is not a clear consensus, NPF representatives will vote on the option with a decision being taken on a simple majority basis. This will strengthen the NPF so it is taking decisions on a yearly basis.
- Following the NPF, Policy Papers will be redrafted by Policy Commissions to reflect the NPF's decisions.
- Once amended, final Policy Papers will be agreed by the JPC before going to Annual Conference for agreement in a vote.
- Submissions on other issues not covered in the Policy Papers will, as at present, be considered by Policy Commissions during the course of the year. They will report on this work in the NPF Annual Report to Conference.
- The JPC will have the ability to recommend additional policy papers outside the formal cycle to be considered by the Party and debated at Conference. This would allow Conference to debate additional key political issues not otherwise covered by the Conference agenda, as well as giving the NPF a mechanism to take Conference's view on its discussions over the course of the year.
- In the final full year of the process prior to a general election Commissions will produce a 'final year document' which draws upon all the previously agreed Policy Papers from earlier years. At this stage local parties and affiliates will have the opportunity to contribute to the discussion by submitting specific amendments for consideration by NPF representatives:
 - Final year documents will be published on the Policy Hub.
 - Party units will be entitled to submit specific textual amendments - this provides the opportunity to call for change in the areas of importance to Party members.
 - Textual amendments will be prioritised by NPF representatives and debated at the final NPF meeting in summer 2014.
 - Once agreed by the NPF, and then Annual Conference these documents form the Party's Policy Programme on which the manifesto is based.
 - The manifesto is then agreed at the Clause V meeting.

- The JPC will have a changed role, setting priorities and steering the NPF as it debates key issues.

Reformed Policy Commissions

Policy Commissions have a vital role as the bodies responsible for drafting policy documents as well as being where members' and affiliates' submissions are considered initially. Policy Commissions currently play an important role in carrying forward contemporary issues from one Conference to the next, and in scrutinising the implementation of policy in government.

Generally Policy Commissions work well as a forum for debate and consideration but there is a sense that their workings are sometimes opaque and distant from the wider membership. More needs to be done to improve understanding of their role, their engagement with the membership and in terms of reporting on their work.

Policy Commissions will focus on key issues that matter most to the Party with the new Policy Ballot giving Conference a new power to direct the work and priorities of the National Policy Forum in the year ahead. Policy Commissions should meet regularly, and should hear evidence from external organisations as well as members and affiliated organisations. Commissions need to be accessible and transparent. Policy commissions should draft documents in a format which encourages engagement and interaction. As well as improving the documents sent out for consultation, we will reform the way commissions respond to the ideas they receive. The new Policy Hub will include a new system of online feedback, improving members' understanding of, and ability to make submissions to, the Policy Commissions. They will report on their work in their Annual Reports to Conference every year.

Under the current system, those NPF representatives who are not elected on to policy commissions do not have day-to-day involvement with their work. The new system will see all NPF representatives able to attend meetings of one of the commissions and play a more active role in policy deliberation.

Recommendations:

- The current six Policy Commissions should be renamed and reorganised to focus on Labour's key priorities.
- The following list is indicative to provide details of how issues could be covered in a reformed system. A final set of Policy Commissions will be agreed by the JPC after Conference reflecting the priorities that come through the 'Policy Ballot'. The Commission structure will be reviewed after the General Election.

1. New Economy

- Stability and Prosperity
- Cost of living
- An economy that works

2. Decent Society:

- Public services
- Secure communities

3. Better Politics

- Better politics

4. Global Leadership

- Britain's global leadership

- New terms of reference for Policy Commissions. These will include commitments to regular meetings; consideration of, and response to, all submissions; evidence sessions from external organisations as well as members and affiliated organisations; and with papers and work programmes published online to encourage transparency.
- Greater involvement in Policy Commissions for all NPF representatives with all representatives able to attend meetings of one Commission.
- Policy Commissions to encourage engagement and participation by looking at innovative ways of working, for example by holding cross-cutting meetings with other Commissions and taking meetings out in to the country.

Engaging our members and reaching out to the public

Being a member of our party brings with it the right to a voice in policy making - we all joined to make a contribution. Submissions to the consultation process were clear that this is a right which we all cherish and that the reform process should seek to strengthen and broaden members' say.

Supporting membership engagement

We need to open up the policy making process, to give members more opportunity to get involved in our discussions as well as making it as easy as possible for them to do so.

Greater clarity is necessary so that members understand how to get involved in the system and what it involves. To accompany a reformed and streamlined system, clear information on structures, with clarity on how to engage with them, and what you can expect when you do, will be provided.

We must also make it easier for members to get involved in the debates, either as individuals, or via their local Party meetings.

Modernising the way we discuss and agree policy means taking advantage of new technology in a way which improves current processes and opens up new avenues of engagement.

Reaching out to the public

Our strength as a movement comes not just from our politicians at the top but from our relationships on the ground - the way we build networks between Party members and the public; in our communities, in workplaces and across civil society.

While our reforms must rightly improve the way that members interact with our policy making system that alone is not enough: we cannot merely talk to ourselves.

Meeting our aim of delivering a policy programme which the British people can believe in and support means developing a system which supports us in reaching out and listening to the public.

We need ideas that are based on real conversations with the public. The best policy does not come from a few people locked in a room; it comes from conversations, on

the doorstep, at the school gate, in our workplaces.

Building policy networks

We need to open up our policy-making, to reach out to Britain and to the voices who have so much to offer us. Engagement with external organisations should be encouraged as it helps to inform our thinking through as wide a range of views as possible and also aids the Party in explaining our current thinking. We must do more to reach out to charities, community groups, workplaces, affiliates, businesses and civil society both at national, but also at local, level.

Recommendations:

Our reforms will focus on opening up our policy making process to our members, affiliates, the public and civil society. Technology will enable us to give people more access to, information on and feedback from our policy making processes.

- We will create an online 'Policy Hub' which will act as central repository for the transformed and renamed PiP. From this website people will be able to read the policy papers, make submissions, read other people's ideas, and respond to them.
- This interactive process, and the publication of each stage of work will allow for better feedback for those who send in their ideas.
- Those who do most work in our communities should have this recognised in our system of policy making - those who can get most support on the 'Policy Hub' for their ideas should have this recognised with the right to present evidence to Commissions.
- Greater engagement from all stakeholders - from NPF representatives to Shadow Cabinet members - with a new statement of rights and responsibilities, including a duty on representatives to take a lead in promoting policy engagement.
- Increased communication of NPF activity, including publishing annual Commission work programmes.
- Local parties encouraged to engage with Non-Governmental Organisations, community groups, businesses, unions, socialist societies and campaigns.

Annex A: Timetable of activity from now until a 2015 General Election

Date	Activity
Conference 2012	'Policy Ballot' held to prioritise issues for consideration in the year ahead.
Oct 2012	JPC commissions 'Policy Challenge Papers'.
Oct - Nov 2012	Policy Commissions draft 'Challenge Papers'.
Nov 2012	JPC sign-off for 'Challenge Papers'.
Nov 2012	'Challenge Papers' published. Party and public invited to make submissions on the Policy Hub.
Late-Feb 2013	Policy Commissions draft 'Policy Papers' based on submissions and evidence received.
March 2013	JPC sign off for 'Policy Papers'
March 2013	'Policy Papers' published and submissions called for via the Policy Hub.
June 2013	NPF meeting. Representatives debate and vote on outstanding issues based on submissions received.
July 2013	Policy Commissions redraft 'Policy Papers' and agree Annual Reports.
July 2013	JPC agree final 'Policy Papers'.
Sept 2013	Conference decision on 2012/13 Policy Papers and NPF Annual Report.
Oct - Dec 2013	Commissions draft 'Final Year Documents'.
Dec 2013-Jan 2014	'Final Year Documents' published.
Jan - May 2014	Party Units invited to make textual amendments to documents.
May 2014	NPF representatives consider the submissions received and decide which amendments to take forward.
June 2014	NPF agrees final year documents which form the Policy Programme
Sept 2014	Annual Conference votes on Policy Programme
April 2015	Clause V meeting to agree the Manifesto

